

**Down with the Trades Hall ban on TU4P!**

# Cops out of the workers movement!

In response to increased police repression against the pro-Palestine demos in Melbourne, the leadership of Trade Unionists for Palestine (TU4P) mooted a call to disaffiliate the police association from the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC). The VTHC responded by locking TU4P out of Trades Hall—those turning up there for TU4P's 28 June public meeting found the doors bolted shut. This effective ban on their meeting was a clear message from the VTHC that if TU4P even raised opposing police affiliation to Trades Hall they would have to find venues elsewhere. This is an outrage! This attempt to silence defenders of Palestine must be defeated, and defeated **now**.

Today, despite continued popular support for Palestine, the Palestinian movement is at a standstill. Saddled with a program of impotent liberal outrage, the movement has been unable to effect any change to the Zionist onslaught on Gaza. The weekly protests are a rump of what they once were, campus encampments have folded and activists are increasingly resorting to fruitless small-scale actions from graffitiing offices to "community pickets" of arms factories. The bourgeoisie smells blood and the movement is increasingly the target of state repression. "Outside agitators" are banned from universities and campus activists face disciplinary action with two ANU students already expelled. At the same time police harassment and intimidation of the Sunday Palestinian demos has escalated. It was in this context that, when someone graffitiing "Cops out of Trades Hall" on the Trades Hall building, left Laborite VTHC secretary Luke Hilakari responded by grotesquely calling for police action declaring "...our relationship with the Victorian Police union has only got stronger over time. That won't change" (AAP).

Cops are not "workers in uniform" but armed defenders of capitalist exploitation and oppression. It is the police that bring batons down against picketing workers, Aboriginal people and Palestinian protesters alike. Kicking the cops and their "unions" out of the Trades Hall, in fact out of the entire workers movement, is not only legitimate but necessary to

defend and advance the Palestinian movement and workers movement as a whole. The VTHC's attempt to silence TU4P for even tabling such an elementary call is an open attack on the Palestinian movement.

While many unions have declared their support for Palestine, after nine months there has still yet to be a single instance of serious industrial action in defence of Palestine. Why is that? The answer is simple. The "Friends of Palestine" union officials are beholden to the Labor government which administers for the ruling class backing the genocide at the behest of American imperialism. Such unity with the open enemies of the working class is also highlighted by the union leadership's embrace of the police as part of the workers movement. Today this unity works to silence voices in support of Palestine.

The first step to get out of the current impasse is to break the bloc that prevents the unions from taking any real actions for Palestine and which attempts to obstruct even the suggestion that the cops be kicked out of Trades Hall. A clear line must be drawn: are you on the side of Palestine or the police? This fight against censorship can and must be won. In 2004, leading up to a Spartacist League forum at Trades Hall, our room booking was cancelled at the behest of the police association because the meeting called for union defence of Aboriginal Redfern against cop terror. In response to this attempted ban, we waged a successful united-front campaign, gaining traction in the left and unions, winning our room back. This was a victory for Aboriginal people and the workers movement more broadly.

Today's ban is not just a suppression of TU4P but of the Palestinian movement as a whole. What is necessary to advance the Palestinian and workers movements is a united-front campaign of unionists, leftists and all defenders of Palestine to fight against this attack, which could be the start of a drive to expel the police from the VTHC and the labour movement more broadly. ■

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**Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)**

iclf.org/aus • redbattler@exemail.com.au • X @ f RedBattlerSLA

**Melbourne** (National Office)

GPO Box 2339, Melbourne Vic 3001

(03) 9329 0275, spartacist-melb@exemail.com.au

**Sydney**

PO Box 244, Burwood NSW 1805

(02) 9281 2181, spartacist@exemail.com.au